



RIVERSIDE PRECINCT DRAFT MASTER PLAN

Gunnedah Open Space Master Plan project

We acknowledge First Nations peoples and their continuing connection to land, waters and culture, because we strongly believe in reconciliation and collaborative engagement for a better future.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, whose knowledge, traditions and stories guide custodianship on what will always be their ancestral lands.

Issue	Title	Date	Prepared	Checked (consultant)	Checked (council)
1	Issue for council review	25.06.2024	A.Hoffman	J.Holland	
2	Issue for exhibition	02.07.2024	A.Hoffman	J.Holland	
3	Revised issue for exhibition	10.07.2024	A.Hoffman	J.Holland	M.Welch
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5					
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8					

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INTRODUCTION

01

INTRODUCTION

The need to develop master plans for key sporting and recreation precincts within the Gunnedah township was identified by council with the adoption of the “*Gunnedah Shire Open Space Strategy 2022-2032*”.

As identified in the Community Strategic Plan 2017 to 2027, Gunnedah Council’s vision is “*a prosperous, caring and proud community reflected in the achievements of the people*”.

This vision statement is supported by four key themes:

- **Engaging and Supporting the Community**
- **Building Our Shire’s Economy**
- **Retaining Our Quality of Life**
- **Protecting and Enjoying Our Beautiful Surrounds**

The project represents Council’s commitment to provide high quality recreation facilities and open space for all ages and abilities across the LGA. This is to ensure the availability of high quality open space to all residents, adding to their well-being and overall liveability of the community.

As an outcome of the strategy Council has selected four key sites within Gunnedah as a catalyst projects:

1. Gunnedah Showground
2. Wolseley Park
3. Kitchener Park
4. Donnelly Fields/Namoi Fields/Riverside Precinct

The project will culminate with a comprehensive Master Plan for each of the selected open spaces in Gunnedah, which will provide a clear vision for the future development and ongoing operation of these open spaces.

The selected open space sites within Gunnedah are considered strategically important to the township due their location, current and potential uses and heritage.

The directions from the “*Gunnedah Shire Open Space Strategy 2022-2032*” are as follows.

Gunnedah Showground

- Develop a new, comprehensive Master Plan over the Showgrounds, including comprehensive consultation with user groups and adjacent land users to ensure this significant community asset is future-proofed and meets contemporary users needs

Wolseley Park

- Develop a master plan over Wolseley Park, with particular focus on the passive recreation areas (i.e. non-sport) around the perimeter of the park
- Investigate upgrading of the existing amenities
- In reference to proposed directions for Kitchener Park, and at the appropriate time, investigate the requirements and available external funding for upgraded field lighting at Wolseley Park

Kitchener Park

Council should continue to maintain Kitchener Park and the following enhancements are recommended:

- Investigate external funding for shade and weather protection over sections of the tiered seating/ grandstand
- Remove the existing tennis and basketball courts and replace with two multisport courts, including basketball, tennis and handball
- Develop an irrigated turf area for warm-up activities and training
- Undertake additional landscaping integrated with the playground and lawn area parallel with Conadilly Street
- Investigate opportunities for a partnership arrangement with a professional team for multiple visits, and the requisite field and facility requirements, including potential relocation of the grass cricket wicket

Donnelly Fields/Namoi Fields/Riverside Precinct

- The entire sport and recreation precinct including Donnelly Fields, Namoi Fields, Namoi River parklands, acquired council land, storm water drainage reserve and parcels of travelling stock routes (TSRS) require a master plan to guide development of this important community asset over the next 10 years

Report Purpose

The master plan report provides a synthesis of work undertaken to date by Group GSA and supported by Gunnedah Shire Council.

This report encompasses work done to date to progress from project inception to the master plan proposals.

Including desktop analysis, site investigations, community and stakeholder engagement, opportunities and constraints, concept design and master plan proposals.

The master plan report compiles the following:

- Desktop analysis - digital mapping and background research, including review of relevant council and state government strategies and background documents
- Site investigations – physical mapping, on-site observations and photographic records
- Stakeholder engagement outcomes summary
- Community consultation outcomes summary
- Identification and exploration of opportunities for the site
- Master plan for the site, identifying key proposals and recommendations
- Supporting descriptions and imagery for key elements included in the master plan

The draft master plan report will be placed on public exhibition, inviting community and stakeholder comment on the proposals. Following the end of the exhibition period, feedback will be collated and examined to agree any changes required before finalisation of the master plan document.

Once a final master plan document is prepared and adopted by Gunnedah Shire Council, the document will be used by Council and key stakeholders to guide the development of the site, and the direction of any future projects contained within it.

All items included within the master plan would be subject to a future detailed design process as projects receive funding. A master plan document is an important tool to ensure the delivery of a cohesive outcome on ground, and can help enhance applications for funding from various bodies.



CONTEXT ANALYSIS

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COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Kamilaroi Aboriginal Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we stand, and their deep and enduring connection to the lands, waterways, community and Spirit.

We pay respect to Elders, past present and emerging.

The name 'Gunnedah' originates in the Gamilaraay/Kamilaroi/Gomeroi language and is derived from the name of its Traditional Custodians, the Gunn-e-Darr Peoples.

The word 'Gunnedah' or 'Gunn-e Darr' is thought to mean 'Place of White Stones', referring to the quartz outcrops which are prevalent throughout the region.

Traditional Custodians have maintained a presence in the Gunnedah region for tens of thousands of years and the Shire sits on the Traditional lands of the Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi/Gomeroi peoples. It extends throughout much of north-east New South Wales and is one of the four largest Aboriginal nations in Australia.

Prior to European settlement, the Gunnedah region was more heavily forested than today, providing staple foods that were hunted, gathered, and cultivated. These hunting practices are preserved in the names of places in the surrounding region, including the 'Wallaby Trap' at the base of Porcupine Lookout, an area where animals were driven and trapped by hunting bands.

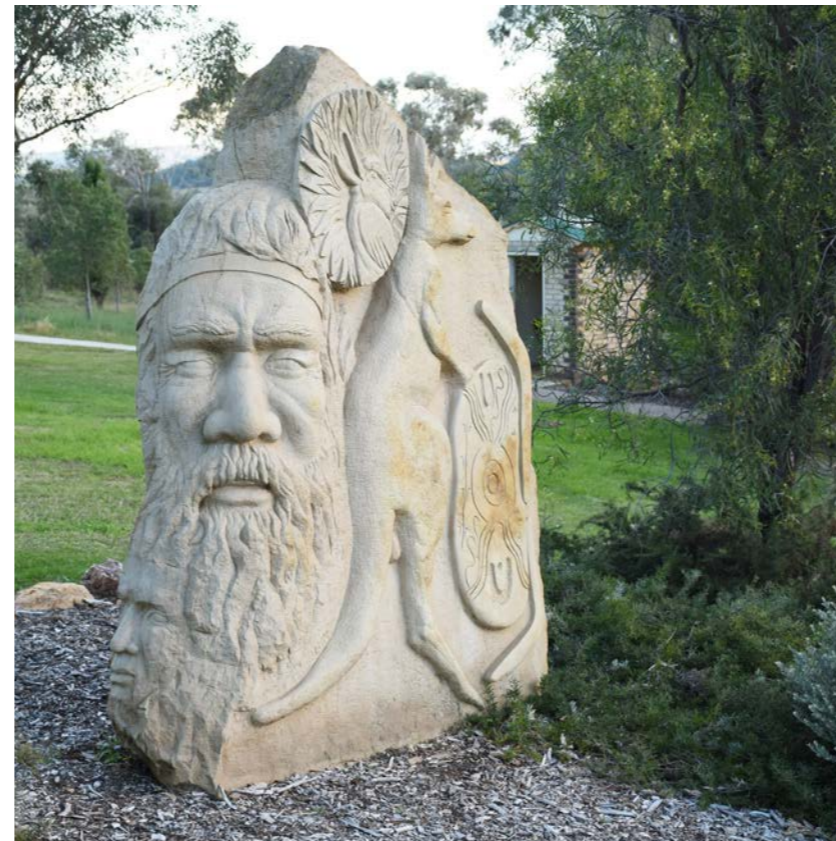
Through shared language, its peoples would trade, conflict, and gather for ceremony and celebrations. Today the Gunnedah region is represented by the Red Chief Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) based in Gunnedah.

Gunnedah traditions and cultural practices remain prevalent in the region today, preserved and extended to community through Elders and family, oral storytelling, the work of local creatives, public art, events and special celebrations, and through artefacts exhibited in the Cumbo Gunnerah Keeping Place at the Red Chief Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The 'Red Chief' refers to Cumbo Gunnerah, a celebrated warrior and leader of the Gunn-e-Darr peoples during the late 18th century, whose stories of bravery and achievement have been passed down to the present day.



The Gunnedah Rainbow Serpent water feature, prepared by local Kamilaroi women, installed in 2020



The Red Chief Stone Sculpture



Sculpture depicting Cumbo Gunnerah the 'Red Chief/Kangaroo'

POST-SETTLEMENT

“I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.”

Excerpt from Dorothy Mackellar’s poem ‘My Country’ thought to have been inspired by her years living in Gunnedah.

The European settlement of Gunnedah developed on the banks of the Namoi River at a suitable river-crossing, used by traders, travellers, and agriculturalists.

Settlement began soon after European explorers passed through the region in the early decades of the 19th century, revealing fertile soils and scattered plains.

The collection of settlements which emerged aside the Namoi River was at first known as ‘The Woolshed’ owing to the prevalence of sheep grazing in the region.

After being surveyed for subdivision in 1854 land sales took place, and the town of Gunnedah was gazetted and settled in increasing numbers, establishing a town centre and a greater variety of local industries.

Gunnedah sits at the intersection of the Oxley Highway, the Kamilaroi Highway and the Namoi River, acting as a rest stop for those travelling to and from New South Wales coastal cities.

In 1879 the train line was constructed to pass directly through Gunnedah on the North West NSW Line, improving transport of goods throughout the state, and allowing further development of local industry, which now includes cotton, coal, beef, lamb, pork, and cereals.

Gunnedah is most famous today for its contemporary influence on Australia’s rural culture, being the host for AgQuip, one of the world’s largest agricultural events, and the inspiration for Dorothea Mackellar’s poem ‘My Country’.

Gunnedah Showground

Gunnedah Showground hosted its first annual show in 1888, when the grounds were little more than an open scrub.

The annual Gunnedah Show was renowned in the region and would mark an important opportunity for agriculturalists and visitors throughout the country to gather.

Gunnedah Showground took its current form in the 1990s and early 2000s, when many of its original and older livestock pavilions and exhibition sheds were demolished and replaced by sporting facilities.

Riverside Precinct

Gunnedah’s Riverside Precinct includes a network of developed and sparse open spaces along the length of the Namoi River, including Woolshed Reserve, Donnelly and Namoi Playing Fields.

Woolshed Reserve is named in honour of the woolsheds that settler John Johnson established on the banks of the Namoi River in the mid 19th century, and is today primarily used for picnics and casual activities.

Donnelly Playing Fields are named after John ‘Dallas’ Donnelly, a Rugby League player from Gunnedah who was a member of the NSW Blues and national Kangaroos teams.



Gunnedah Showground, circa. 1924



Gunnedah, Kamilaroi Highway intersection with Chandos Street, facing east, circa. 1950s. Corner of Wolseley Park visible at left of image

ECOLOGY

Gunnedah is located in the centre of the Namoi River and Black Jack State Forest. The Namoi River is a vast riparian ecological system and a major perennial river that is part of the Barwon catchment of the Murray Darling basin. The Black Jack State Forests is another example of a healthy woodland communities being home to an abundance of wildlife.

The Namoi River contributes to a large river system that extends through much of rural NSW, being the main waterway running west through undulating country.

Extensive ecological communities thrive along the river foreshore and basin. The Namoi River is habitat for many aquatic species and River Red gum woodlands.

The overall ecosystem health of the Namoi River Valley is considered poor. The health of the fish community was rated very poor, the expected native species are not as present.

The riverine vegetation is considered also to be in a poor condition. The overall physical form of the river system was rated as moderate.

There are three vegetation communities that dominate the Black Jack State forest being the Ironbark cypress Woodland, Cypress-White Box and Hilltop Red Gum Woodland.

These communities are common trees that are fed on by koalas, showing the importance of the maintenance and protection of this ecological communities located south of Gunnedah.

Two ecological communities are identified within the site area, to be conserved and bolstered where possible:

- Poplar Box - Yellow Box - Western Grey Box grassy woodland on cracking clay soils mainly in the Liverpool Plains, Brigalow Belt South Bioregion (Brigalow Clay Plain Woodlands)
 - + Upper Stratum - Eucalyptus populnea (Boxes)
 - + Mid Stratum - Geijera parviflora (Wilga); Maireana
 - + Ground Stratum - Arundinella
- River Red Gum riparian tall woodland / open forest wetland in the Nandewar Bioregion and Brigalow Belt South Bioregion (Inland Riverine Forests)
 - + Upper Stratum - Eucalyptus
 - + Mid Stratum - Callistemon (Bottle Brush)
 - + Ground Stratum - Aristida personata (Wire-Grass)

Australian Green Tree Frog

One of the 4 native amphibians that inhabit the Black Jack State Dry Sclerophyll Forest and the Namoi River, benefiting from the open wetlands which dominate its foreshore, present within the Riverside Precinct.

Koala

The koala also occupies the eucalyptus trees in the State Forest and with their declining population, are a very important species to help protect and flourish within Gunnedah.

Gunnedah Shire Council has initiated revegetation efforts along the foreshore of the Namoi River to provide feeder trees for the local koala population.



Australian Green Tree Frog



Koala



The Namoi River which defines the northern edge of Gunnedah's urban area



Sparse tree coverage along the foreshore of the Namoi River within the Riverside Precinct

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Gunnedah is situated in north-western New South Wales in the fertile Liverpool Plains, a primarily agricultural region, west of the Great Dividing Range.

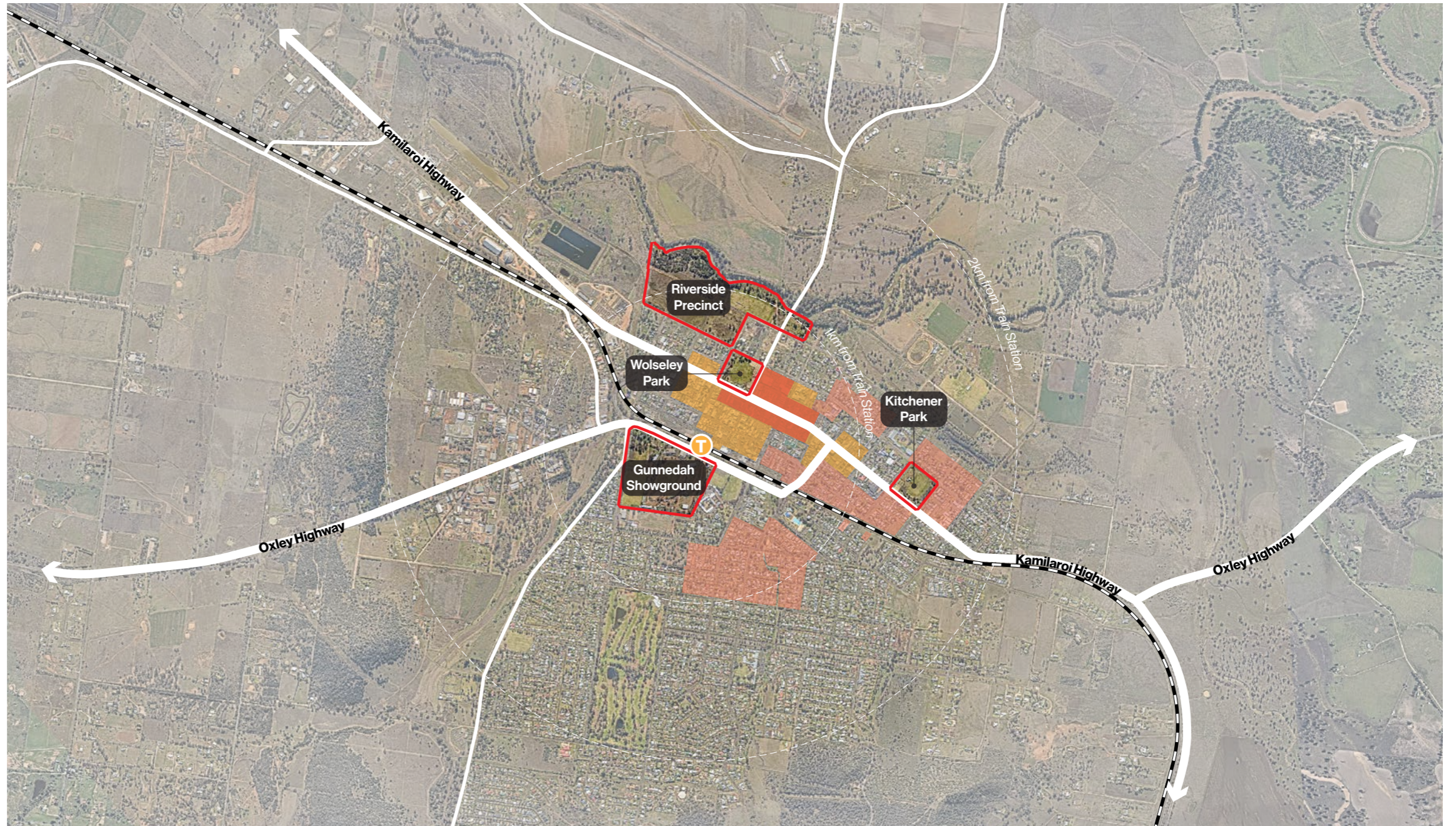
The town is located at the junction of the Kamilaroi Highway and Oxley Highway, providing excellent links to surrounding rural centres of Tamworth, Narrabri, and Coonabarabran. The township is located south of the Namoi River, with an urban area extending south towards Black Jack State Forest.

The two regional east-west arterial roads intersect in Gunnedah town centre, bringing many travellers through the town as they continue towards north-west NSW or the east coast.

Gunnedah Train Station is situated south of the town centre adjacent to Gunnedah Showground, which is the host of the annual Gunnedah Show and many other local events.

Gunnedah's residential areas extend far to the town's south towards Black Jack State Forest, with its town centre primarily focussed on commercial industry and community services.

Higher density typologies of residential development are found in proximity of the town centre, including strata properties and shop-top housing.



LEGEND

Site Boundary

Rail Line

Primary Road

Sub-Arterial Road

Commercial / Retail

E1 Local Centre

R3 Medium Density Residential

Scale 1:30,000 @ A3

0m 120 240 600 1,200

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Gunnedah's public open space network is distributed throughout its town centre, and consists primarily of large, sporting-oriented parks and playing fields.

Gunnedah's local centre extends along Kamilaroi Highway and Chandos Street, and hosts much of the town's commercial offers and community infrastructure.

Wolseley Park on Kamilaroi Highway is most easily accessible from Gunnedah's local centre, and is one of the town's most popular recreational open spaces, host to a cricket pitch and playground.

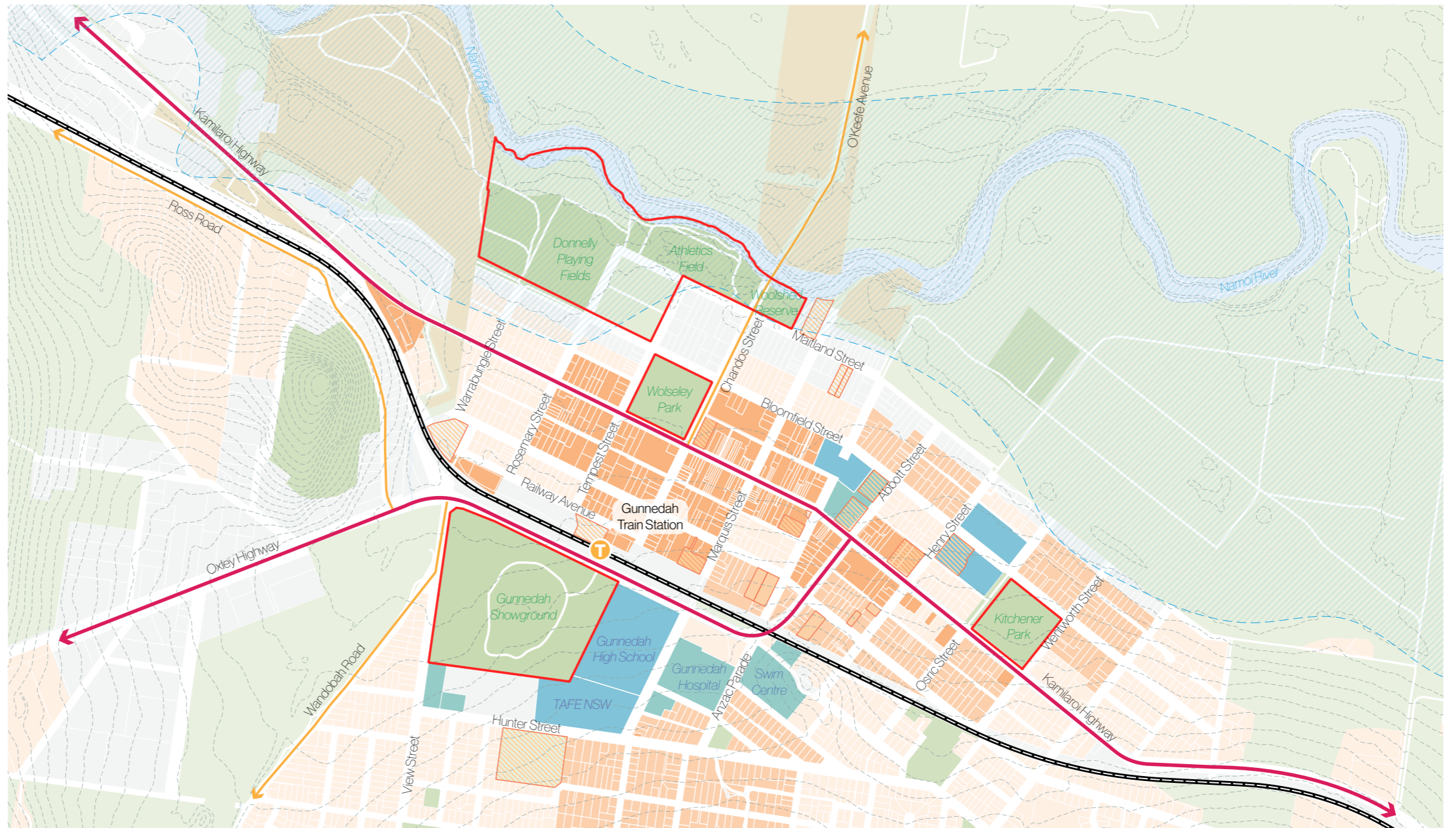
Due to its proximity to commercial offers and active streets, Wolseley Park is the town's most well developed open space, offering a range of services and catering to a wide audience with an inclusive playground.

To Wolseley Park's north, the Riverside Precinct including the Donnelly Playing Fields and Woolshed Reserve constitute open space along the length of the Namoi River.

In comparison to other large open spaces, the Riverside Precinct remains relatively undeveloped, due to their distance from Gunnedah town centre and proximity to grazing grounds, consisting of open pasture and riverside wetlands. The Riverside Precinct is within a high hazard floodway area during a 1% AEP as it is situated within close proximity of the Namoi River.

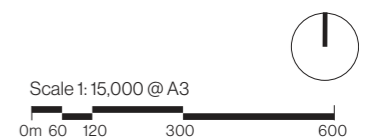
Gunnedah Showground sits south of the rail line with access limited from Gunnedah town centre via a rail crossing on Marquis Street. It is situated within an active community precinct which includes Gunnedah High School, Gunnedah TAFE, and a number of key local community institutions.

Kitchener Park is situated at the eastern extent of Gunnedah's urban fringe, sitting within a largely residential neighbourhood.



LEGEND

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| Site Boundary | Rail Line | Residential | Education | Travelling Stock Reserve |
| Public Open Space | Primary Road | R3 Medium Density Residential | Community | High Hazard Flood (1% AEP) |
| Open Space | Sub-Arterial Road | Commercial / Retail | Heritage Item | |



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In June 2022, Gunnedah Shire Council released the Gunnedah Shire Open Space Strategy 2022 - 2032.

A 10 year plan to inform the development of Gunnedah's open space network, the strategy identifies existing infrastructure demands, and where they are best allocated in future.

The Gunnedah Shire Open Space Strategy 2022-2032 identifies an existing gap in the supply of 'Recreation Parks' to be exacerbated with future population growth.

Currently the total provision of public open space in Gunnedah is high when compared with other LGA's in NSW, at approximately 6.4ha / 1,000 people.

Much of this open space however is currently utilised for sporting facilities, leaving a deficit in the amount of passive recreation parks.

These sporting facilities include many of the town's largest open spaces, including Wolseley Park and Kitchener Park, as well as Gunnedah Showground.

Existing passive recreational open space is concentrated within the Riverside Precinct, and various pocket parks throughout Gunnedah.

The gap identified in the provision of passive 'Recreation Parks' suggests that either:

- There is opportunity to repurpose active open space (sport parks) into passive open space (recreation parks), ideally by allowing for dual function and integration of different spaces
- Additional open space may be required in future through residential development contributions or the repurposing of crown lands

Overall however, Gunnedah's total supply of combined open space meet demand for projected populations up to 2040 at a provision rate of 4ha / 1,000 people.

It is most appropriate then that existing active open space (sport parks) be reconfigured to allow for dual function, as both sporting fields when needed, and as passive open space at other times.

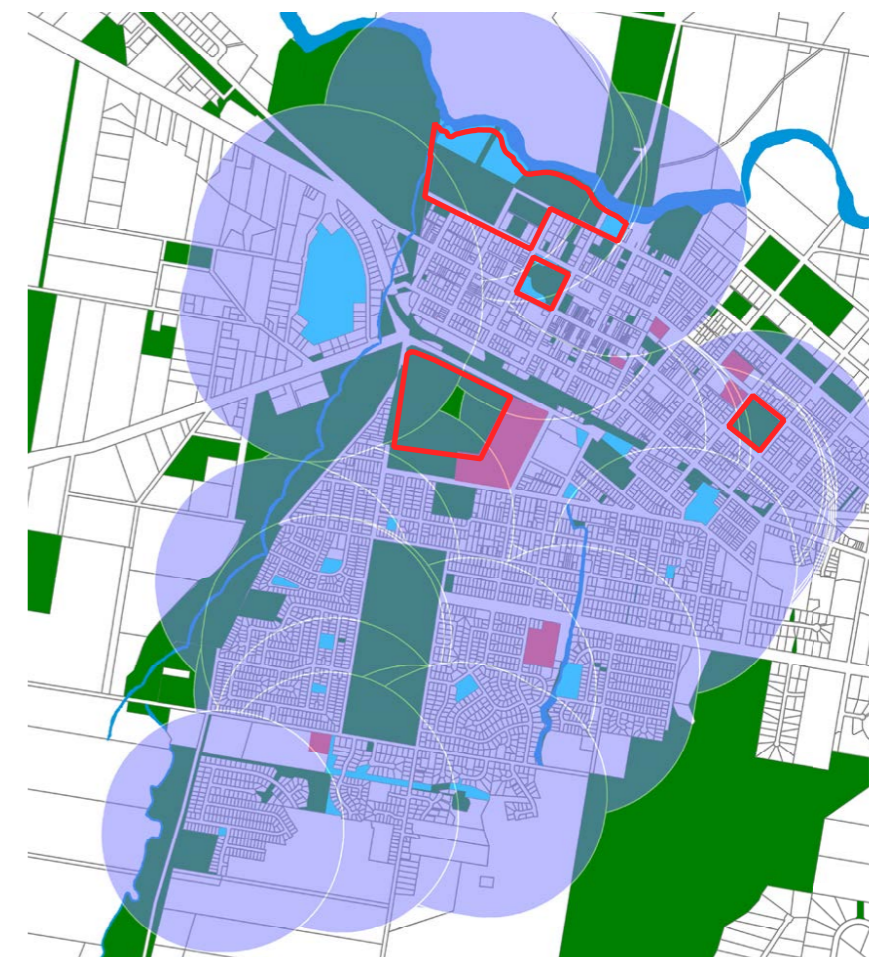
This will ensure that Gunnedah's total supply of passive open space is met up to 2040, while also ensuring that existing sporting infrastructure is maintained.

Open Space Classification	Current Supply (ha)	Current (2016) 12,500		Future (2041) 20,508	
		Demand	Gap	Demand	Gap
Recreation Parks	35.74	43.75	-8.01	71.78	-36.04
Sports Parks	47.93	36.25	+11.68	59.47	-11.54
Total Open Space	83.68	80.00	+3.68	131.25	-47.57
Calculations using the alternative provision rate of 4ha / 1,000 people					
Total Open Space	83.68	50.00	+33.68	82.00	+1.68

Scenario Three: Council population projection of 20,000 residents by 2040. Provision of core open space required for current and projected population in 5 year increments. Source: Gunnedah Shire Open Space Strategy 2022-2032, pg. 36.



Map showing the location of playgrounds and youth spaces in relation to residences. Site outlined in red. Source: Gunnedah Shire Open Space Strategy 2022-2032, pg. 61.



Map showing the open space network and recreation parks within 600m of residents. Site outlined in red. Source: Gunnedah Shire Open Space Strategy 2022-2032, pg. 59.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An important part of the project is engagement to seek community input and to ensure the voices and inputs of the community and interest groups are heard in the future planning and enhancement of the open space areas.

Overview

GroupGSA have liaised with Gunnedah Shire Council to determine the most appropriate methods for organising and conducting the community engagement throughout the project.

The community engagement strategy has been structured to occur over three rounds.

- Round 1 - Key stakeholder engagement to inform the draft master plans (complete)
- Round 2 - Community engagement to inform the draft master plans (complete)
- Round 3 - Exhibition period and community engagement to present the draft master plans (scheduled for 2024)

Round 1 (completed)

The purpose of Round 1 was to meet with key stakeholders in small groups to share important background information such as current use patterns, opportunities, constraints and wish lists.

Meetings were conducted with the following organisations/groups during October 2023. Meetings were generally held on site for a period of 1-2 hours, incorporating a site walk to discuss key items.

1. Riverside precinct key stakeholders, including Rotary, Landcare, and touch football
2. Wolseley Park key stakeholders including Gunnedah Tennis Club, Louis Tennis Academy, and Gunnedah Bulldogs AFL club
3. Evening stakeholder forum at Gunnedah Town Hall with stakeholders invited to open discussion on all sites. Stakeholders and representatives from key groups were invited to attend this session in addition to or in place of the on-site meetings held during the same period (meetings 1, 2, 5 & 6). This Included Representation from various sporting groups associated with various sites
4. Council parks and gardens staff to discuss maintenance and other relevant items
5. Gunnedah Showground key stakeholders, including Gunnedah Show Society, Gunnedah & District Kennel Club, Gunnedah Basketball Association, Gunnedah Junior Rugby League, Gunnedah Woodturners Association, Namoi Horse, Gunnedah & District Pony Club, Riding for the Disabled, Gunnedah Pottery Club, and Gunnedah & District Spinners & Weavers
6. Kitchener Park key stakeholders, including Gunnedah Rugby League Football Club
7. Meeting with key council staff from planning, infrastructure, economic development and tourism departments

All the consultation sessions included representatives from both GroupGSA (Consultant) and Council.

Round 2 (completed)

The purpose of Round 2 was to provide open community forums to gain input and background knowledge from the general community and to help the project team to better understand community attitudes and views towards each of the parks. Sessions were held as follows.

1. Afternoon drop in session held outside Gunnedah Town Hall (Dec 5, 2023)
2. Evening drop in session held outside Gunnedah Town Hall (Dec 5, 2023)
3. Morning drop in session held outside Gunnedah Newsagency (Dec 6, 2023)
4. Online "Have your Say" survey on the council website inviting community to complete a questionnaire for each of the sites (Dec 2023 - Jan 2024)

All the consultation sessions included representatives from both GroupGSA (Consultant) and Council.

The key outcomes from round 1 and round 2 of the engagement process are covered in the following section of the report.

Round 3 (future)

The purpose of Round 3 will be to give the community and stakeholders an opportunity to review the master plans and comment on the proposals. This is vital to ensuring that the master plan for each site reflects community attitudes and values, preserving key features and addressing challenges in the short, medium and long term.

Prior to commencing the engagement process, approval will be obtained from Council to display the draft master plan. The engagement methodology is to include the following.

1. Exhibition period to gather feedback and commentary from the local community
2. Community drop-in session held outside Gunnedah Newsagency
3. Publicity through Council website and social media

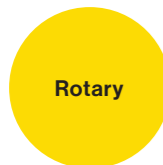
As per rounds 1 and 2, all consultation sessions will include representatives from both GroupGSA (Consultant) and Council.



Community drop in session, Dec 2023

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT (ROUND 1)

Meeting Attendees



Riverside Precinct

Current Use

- Touch football use the fields regularly, with 6 touch fields and peak usage on Monday nights. 240 children playing means Donnelly is at capacity, and they are at the point of having to split between Namoi and Donnelly
- Little athletics use Donnelly, with grass track and newly constructed long jump pits and shotput pads
- School athletics carnivals held at Donnelly, as well as occasional gala days for other sports like touch football
- Donnelly used regularly by golfers, particularly since the local driving range closed
- All open space areas are used by people with dogs, some off-leash, some on-leash on the riverside walk
- One colour run has occurred in the Riverside precinct, with another booked in
- Travelling stock route located along Maitland Street. Used occasionally by travelling stock, and used in flooding to move local stock to higher ground
- Woolshed Reserve used mainly for dog walking and picnics. Off-leash dog area (unfenced due to flood risk)
- Fire and Rescue NSW have a purpose-built training ground on/under Woolshed Reserve
- Current unused open space at corner of Maitland St and Marquis Street could be part of the master plan area and activated
- Rotary currently in process of installing picnic tables in open space at corner of Maitland Street and Marquis Street (concrete slabs installed, furniture to come)

Problems Identified

- Storage for Touch Football is not adequate.
- Golfers often leave divots in turf which creates maintenance problems
- Donnelly, Namoi and Woolshed all subject to flooding
- Littering and vandalism occasionally an issue
- Buildings have be vandalised and appears to be in danger of further damage/demolition

Wish lists / Possible Uses

- New clubhouse building, possibly double storey as per one built recently in Tamworth
- Gunnedah Gallop (8km run) could be re-routed to utilise part of the riverside walkway
- Little athletics would like to see permanent discus cages installed to improve safety of users
- Improved shade and seating around Donnelly for sports users
- Publicly accessible toilets open during the day within the Riverside Precinct. Lots of walkers and casual users but amenities are only open when in use by sporting groups
- Derelict building in open space at corner of Maitland Street and Marquis Street could be converted into public toilets

Meeting Attendees



Council staff - Parks and Gardens Team

Current Use

- OzTag currently uses Donnelly in winter, moving to Longmuir Fields for Summer. Opportunity to keep them in one location year-round
- Junior cricket played on Friday nights in summer. 4 games on Namoi and 2 on Donnelly
- Wolseley Park has two more turf wickets than Kitchener and is therefore the premier cricket field in Gunnedah
- McAndrew Park was previously used for cricket but is not being used currently
- 20-20 cricket is currently played at Kitchener under lights
- Council currently have a mower store at the Showground, and a mower stored in the scoreboard building at Wolseley Park, although tennis keep asking council to relocate it to facilitate additional storage space for the club. No storage at Riverside
- Wolseley Park has 5 BBQs, with the bottom one being replaced after the last flood. One new BBQ is going in at Kitchener Park (the first one at that location). Woolshed Reserve has an old wood BBQ to be removed. No plans for new BBQ here due to flood risk
- Woolshed Reserve is popular for picnics and dog walking
- Cohens Park (at corner of Maitland Street and Marquis Street) is an old asbestos dumping ground and the soil is contaminated. The existing old building didn't go under in the last flood – it sits on higher ground
- Bins are emptied by a contractor where easily accessible. Bins along the riverside walkway are emptied by council

Problems Identified

- Sinkholes on Namoi caused by underlying fill and exacerbated by flooding in recent years
- Council maintenance vehicles are legally not allowed to drive more than 1km on the road, which is a problem for Riverside as it is more than 1km from the council depot
- Table and rotunda at Woolshed Reserve are rotten out and need replacing

Wish lists / Possible Uses

- Public toilets at Donnelly should be open to the public daily. Increased use in the precinct with the riverside walk but no supporting facilities to encourage users to stay longer
- New space available for sports fields would be ideal for Junior League
- Council staff would like a mower store at each park
- Gardens at Gunnedah Cemetery are low maintenance and easy to look after. Similar style of gardens would be acceptable
- Trees along the edge of Namoi fields would be good for shade, although noting that there is a water main running along Maitland Street that may impact possible tree planting

Council staff - Planning, infrastructure, economic development & tourism

- Flooding and accessibility requirements for any new facilities
- General support for the land (including additional lot bounded by Tempest Street, Boomfield Street, Maitland Street and Rosemary Street) being used for sports
- Come and Try event hosted on site in December. Accessibility for events like these could be better
- Crime and anti-social behaviour is an issue at this location
- Koala corridors and habitat needs to be considered
- Woolshed Reserve has untapped potential. Would be ideal for events if improved, but currently its potential is untapped
- Improvements needed to river access. Possibility of hosting rafting or rubber duck events if safe access in and out of the river could be managed. Requirement for full accessibility
- Submission from Cancer Council during the exhibition of the Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) requesting more shade

COMMUNITY SURVEY (ROUND 2)

Summary

Gunnedah Shire Council conducted an online survey from December 2023 - January 2024 to gather information on how community members utilise the open space area and recreation facilities.

The information gathered will help guide the development of the master plans for Gunnedah Showground, Wolseley Park, Riverside Precinct and Kitchener Park. The master plans will guide the future development of many of Gunnedah Shire's key sport and recreation facilities.

The input will help address current key challenges, including improving accessibility and inclusiveness, finding ways to better activate spaces, and determining the need for renewals or additional facilities and infrastructure.

The survey asked the following questions:

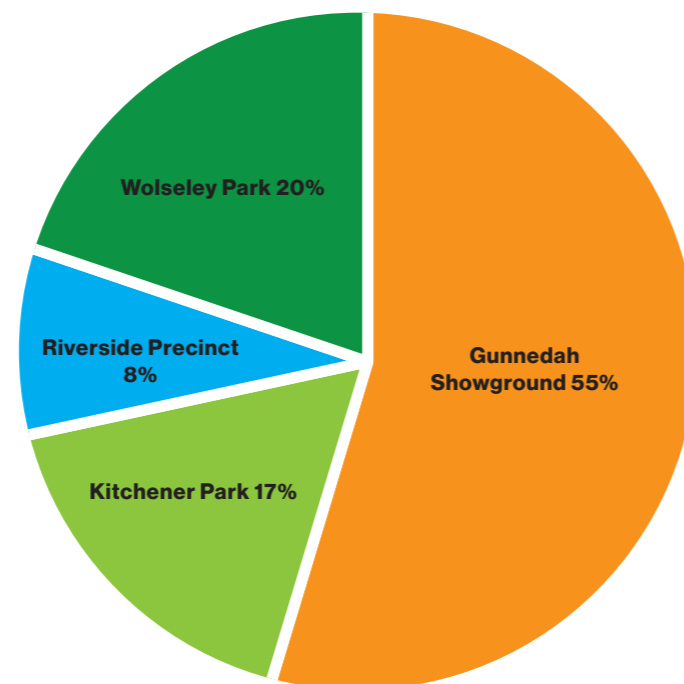
1. How often do you visit the space?
2. Why do you visit the space?
3. Are you or family members a member of any sporting clubs or sporting association that use the area?
4. Are you or family members a member of any community group that use the Park?
5. What do you like most about at the space?
6. What do you like least about at the space?
7. What could be improved at the park
8. Are there new or renewed facilities that you would like to see at the Park
9. Are there any other comments you would like to add about the space ?

Results

There were a total of 525 responses to the online survey. Visitors to the website had the option to complete surveys for any or all of the open spaces.

Number of responses by park

OPEN SPACE	RESPONSES
Gunnedah Showground	287
Wolseley Park	104
Riverside Precinct	45
Kitchener Park	89



“ It is extremely well-maintained and can be used by a variety of community and sporting groups for a variety of events. ”
Gunnedah Showground

“ It is an asset to the town and having the tennis courts always in action makes Gunnedah look thriving. ”
Wolseley Park

“ It is a peaceful area to walk in nature or ride bikes, especially with a pet or little children. ”
Riverside Precinct

“ Plenty of space that can offer the community a variety of activities including sports, recreational activities as well as family options. ”
Kitchener Park

How often the parks get visited

Gunnedah Showgrounds

	RESPONSES	%
Daily	24	8%
Up to 3 times a week	27	9%
Up to 5 times a week	11	4%
Weekly	56	19%
Monthly	101	31%
Other	68	23%

Wolseley Park

	RESPONSES	%
Daily	6	6%
Up to 3 times a week	34	33%
Up to 5 times a week	5	5%
Weekly	36	35%
Monthly	16	15%
Other	7	7%

Riverside Precinct

	RESPONSES	%
Daily	5	11%
Up to 3 times a week	11	24%
Up to 5 times a week	7	15%
Weekly	16	35%
Monthly	6	13%
Other	1	2%

Kitchener Park

	RESPONSES	%
Daily	4	4%
Up to 3 times a week	11	12%
Up to 5 times a week	4	4%
Weekly	21	24%
Monthly	31	35%
Other	18	20%

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS



Likes

Which parts of the Riverside Precinct do you usually visit?

1. Donnelly Playing Fields (37%)
2. Shared path (35%)
3. Namoi Playing Fields (9%)
4. Landcare area (9%)
5. Other (9%)
6. Woolshed Reserve (2%)

What do you like most about the Riverside Precinct?

1. Proximity and views to river (17 responses)
2. Shared path facility (14 responses)
3. Open space and peaceful atmosphere (12 responses)
4. Sports facilities (fields) (8 responses)
5. Well-maintained and tidy (3 responses)
6. Capacity to host evening events (1 response)
7. Playground (1 response)



Improvements

What do you like least about the Riverside Precinct?

1. Rubbish & environmental vandalism (14 responses)
2. Overall presentation and maintenance issues (7 responses)
3. Vehicular conflicts on shared path and between fields and amenities block (7 responses)
4. Flood impacts limiting usability (7 responses)
5. Lack of toilet facilities (6 responses)
6. Not enough shade (5 responses)
7. Not enough seating (5 responses)
8. No drinking water available (4 responses)
9. Parking (4 responses)
10. Lack of facilities (3 responses)
11. River access (3 responses)
12. Bollards (2 responses)
13. Snakes in summer, no fencing to off-leash area, canteen condition, lighting (one response each)

What could be improved at the Riverside Precinct?

1. More shade (12 responses)
2. Improved maintenance & rubbish collection (10 responses)
3. Better access to toilets (8 responses)
4. Provide drinking water station (6 responses)
5. More seating, possibly including grandstands (6 responses)
6. Manage vehicular access and create safe crossing to amenities building (4 responses)
7. Better parking (4 responses)
8. General beautification (4 responses)
9. Remove bollards for better river access (3 responses)
10. Add picnic facilities (2 responses)
11. Add fencing (2 responses)
12. Remove 4WD access to riparian zone; install weir in river; add public address system; add second club house with storage; add skate park; locate more sports here; move sports away from here to Longmuir; move equestrian sports to Riverside (1 response each)



Accessibility

Are you or family members a member of any sporting clubs or association that use the Riverside Precinct?

- Yes - 67%
- No - 33%

Do you use the shared path?

- Yes - 80%
- No - 20%

Comments about accessibility across survey

- Connections to other existing paths should be improved
- New paths through surrounding riverside areas would be good
- Management of vehicle movements required to ensure pedestrian safety
- Formalise parking
- Surface upgrades
- All-abilities playground
- Remove bollards for river access
- Improved access to toilets



Wish List

Are there new or renewed facilities that you would like to see at the Riverside Precinct?

1. Shaded picnic areas (9 responses)
2. New toilets (8 responses)
3. BBQ facilities (4 responses)
4. More shade (4 responses)
5. Resurface roads, particularly dirt roads near picnic area (3 responses)
6. New canteen building (3 responses)
7. New playground (3 responses)
8. More seating (2 responses)
9. New drinking water point (2 responses)
10. Extend shared path system to connect to other paths and onto northern river bank (2 responses)
11. New dog park (2 responses)
12. New skate park, fitness gym, volleyball and basketball courts, weir to maintain water in dry times (1 response each)

Are there any other comments you would like to add about the Riverside Precinct?

- Poorly presented riverfront compared to other towns in the region
- Would be a good place to keep a section of the river tidy for fishing, swimming, kayaking etc.
- Needs more control of vehicles who cause damage in the wet
- Athletics facilities could be upgraded and attract significant regional events



SITE ANALYSIS

03

EXISTING FACILITIES

- 1 Donnelly Fields
- 2 Amenities building & storage
- 3 Playground
- 4 Namoi Playing Fields
- 5 Landcare revegetation area
- 6 Shared path
- 7 Additional land parcel for expansion of sporting facilities within the precinct
- 8 Riverside picnic area (and informal parking)
- 9 Woolshed Reserve



EXISTING CHARACTER

The Riverside Precinct constitutes a variety of open spaces along the edge of the Namoi River, which have recently undergone some redevelopment.

Recent development is concentrated within the precinct's north-west including the Riverine Parklands Playground and pedestrian footpath constructed in 2018.

Revegetation efforts along the Namoi River aim to provide feeding trees for local koala populations, to be set aside as a key urban habitat for conservation. Otherwise existing tree coverage is sparse, concentrated along the Namoi River.

Sporting activities occur in the Donnelly Fields and athletics track field which constitute the largest open spaces within the precinct.

The central open space bound by Rosemary Street and Tempest Street is currently not cultivated for any particular uses.



1. View of the athletics track from the Riverine Parklands Playground facing east



2. Revegetation efforts along the Namoi River



3. Athletics facilities within the athletics track field



4. Woolshed Park facing south.



5. The central block is currently not cultivated for any events or uses

LAND USE & BUILT FORM

Much of the Riverside Precinct is devoted to organised sport, with supporting passive recreation along the Namoi River. Some sections of the precinct are currently not developed for any specific uses and are available for additional facilities.

Sporting uses are restricted to Donnelly and Namoi playing fields which constitute the largest defined open spaces within the precinct.

Donnelly Fields are used primarily for touch football / OzTag in winter and little athletics in summer. Other users include cricket, school carnivals and special gala days for various sports.

Namoi Fields are used for junior cricket in summer, with no regular formal use in winter.

The Riverine Parklands Playground is situated on an elevated mound adjacent to the amenities building, overlooking Donnelly Fields. It was constructed in 2018 as part of public domain upgrades to the river precinct.

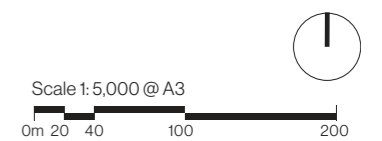
Woolshed Reserve is situated at the furthest eastern extent of the precinct and has few public domain features, intended for casual recreation, Fire and Rescue Training and for picnics. Woolshed Reserve is linked to the Cohen's Warehouse heritage site via a pedestrian footpath.

In the central block of council-owned land (bound by Tempest Street and Rosemary Street), the open space features trees in grass, with no public domain improvements or formal community facilities.



LEGEND

Site Boundary	Rail Line	Overhead Power Line	Playground
Public Open Space	Existing Built Form	Interface to Private Property	Sporting Field
Open Space	Heritage Item	Fencing	Crown Land
	Travelling Stock Reserve		



LANDFORM & ACCESS

Situated along the foreshore of the Namoi River, the Riverside Precinct benefits from a rich landscape and healthy native ecosystem.

Revegetation efforts initiated in the prior few years aim to bolster riverine ecological communities and are currently concentrated within the site's north-western extent.

This bushland is identified as an Inland Riverine Forest ecological community, characterised by the predominance of the River Red Gum, with an open wetland ground-cover.

The Riverside Precinct is accessed via Rosemary Street and Maitland Street which intersect within the site boundary, along which existing parking is concentrated.

Additional access points along Bloomfield Street and along the site's western boundary extent are used sparingly to access grazing lands further to the site's north-west.

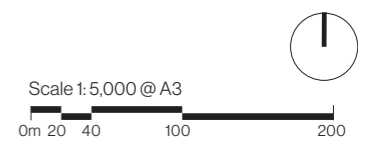
Chandos Street / O'Keefe Avenue bisect the Riverside Precinct at Woolshed Reserve, which is accessed via a pedestrian footpath passing underneath the road reserve.

These footpaths form a continuous east-west route which links the Cohen's Warehouse heritage site through to the Kamilaroi Highway, via the central playground.



LEGEND

- | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Site Boundary | Rail Line | Inland Riverine Forests | Contours 2m |
| Public Open Space | Vehicular Access Point | Existing Tree | Carparking |
| Open Space | Vehicular Movement | Regeneration Area | Underpass |
| | Pedestrian/Cycle Link | | |



OPPORTUNITIES

The Riverside Precinct is an extensive open space along the Namoi River in relative close proximity to the Town Centre. Additional land exists available for new sporting facilities.

The opportunities focus on enhancing the connectivity from the River Precinct to Wolseley Park and the town centre, along with reinforcing both the formal and informal recreation opportunities on site, and overall setting and amenity of the precinct that reinforces its riverside location.

- 01** Upgraded amenities, canteen, storage and play area
- 02** New Shade/ Shelter structures and seating throughout sports areas
- 03** Riverside Landscape improvements, including picnic facilities, seating, signage, improved access to water
- 04** Formalise vehicle access and parking
- 05** Connecting Pathway around site linking to Wolseley Park
- 06** Future Cricket/ AFL / netball/ tennis courts etc as an overflow to Wolseley Oval (indicative field shown)
Other facilities could include BMX pump track
- 07** Opportunity for street tree planting, along with canopy tree planting within the open space areas to improve the visual setting of the precinct and increased shade across the site for users and visitors to the river.
- 08** Provide new pedestrian crossing in car park to improve safety and connectivity
- 09** Improve linkages between oval and river precinct, with provision of build outs to reduce crossing widths and improve safety





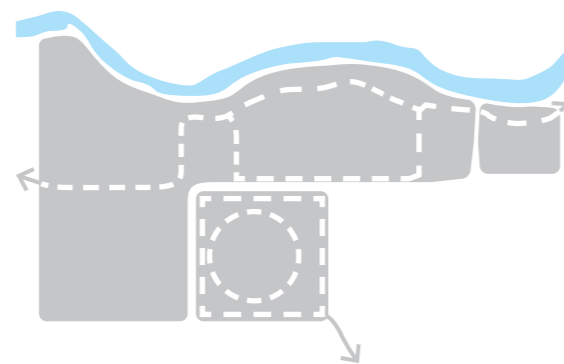
DRAFT MASTER PLAN

04

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

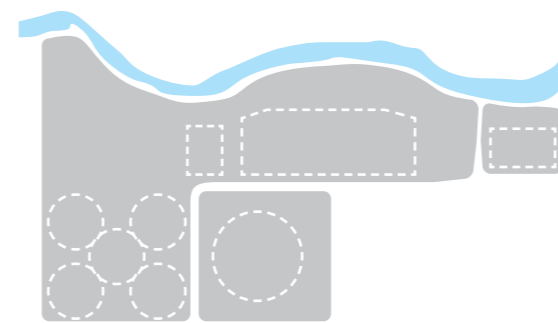
The four key design principles adjacent have guided development of the draft master plan for the Riverside Precinct.

Enhance connectivity from the Riverside Precinct to Gunnedah Town Centre



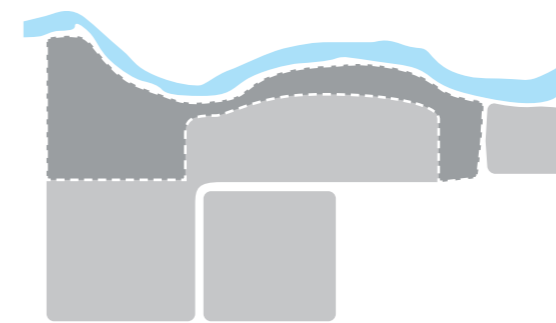
- Create new path network to link existing riverside path with the town centre and encourage active transport
- Utilise the new land parcel and Wolseley Park to provide a path network embedded in open space

Strengthen both formal and informal recreation facilities to encourage diversity of use



- Upgrade sporting facilities to provide high quality facilities for existing clubs and user groups
- Extend and provide additional connections to the riverside shared path to provide additional choice and variety to users to encourage more frequent use

Enhance existing amenity and landscape setting of the precinct adjacent to the river



- Increase opportunity to engage with the river
- Provide additional areas of planting and revegetation to increase quality of riparian zone and improve ecological outcomes

Maximise resilience



- Design new facilities to be flood resilient
- Consider climate resilience and comfort of users. Maximise shade and reduce heat load by minimising large areas of hardstand
- Encourage active transport by providing easily accessible links to key destinations

DRAFT MASTER PLAN

- 01** Proposed upgrade to existing amenities building including new, raised pedestrian crossing between playing fields and amenities to improve safety
- 02** Summer and winter sporting activities to remain at Donnelly Playing Fields. No cages to be implemented due to flooding risk
- 03** New Shade/ Shelter structures and seating to perimeter of sports areas
- 04** Riverside landscape improvements, including picnic facilities, seating, signage, improved access to river
- 05** Improve parking adjacent the river parklands, with a hard surface road and parking area (with linemarking). New layout to include a dedicated crossing point for existing shared path to improve safety
- 06** Replace picnic shelter and tables in Woolshed Reserve. No BBQs to be provided due to flood risk. New path to connect to Maitland Street, and fencing upgrade. Retain F&R facilities
- 07** New Cricket / AFL oval on additional council-owned land - proposed as an extension to Wolseley Park and to provide alternative cricket facility to Kitchener Park
- 08** Proposed amenities to Cricket / AFL oval. Assume elevated building with storage under to mitigate flood risk
- 09** Formalise 90° parking to roads adjacent various sporting fields to maximise efficiency and parking numbers
- 10** Opportunity for street tree planting and canopy tree planting within the open space areas to improve the visual setting of the precinct and increased shade across the site for users and visitors to the river
- 11** Additional pedestrian paths to connect into existing shared path and link Riverside precinct to town centre through Wolseley Park, improving accessibility. Loop path around Donnelly Fields
- 12** Improve pedestrian safety at intersection of Bloomfield Street and Tempest Street with provision of build outs to reduce crossing widths and increase visibility
- 13** Existing ecological zone protected and maintained
- 14** New ecological zone established to wrap Donnelly Fields and extend riparian vegetation. Maintain offset from shared path for user safety



Sporting Facilities

Incorporation of New Land Parcel

The master plan incorporates a new parcel of land owned by council and previously identified for the expansion of sporting facilities within Gunnedah. The block is bound by Bloomfield Street, Tempest Street, Maitland Street and Rosemary Street.

As per the remainder of the Riverside Precinct, this parcel of land is flood impacted and flood resilience needs to be taken into account in detailed design phase of any new facilities.

Touch Football / OzTag

The existing field provision of six (6) full size touch football fields (70m x 50m plus 5m touch zones at each end) is retained within Donnelly Fields.

Athletics

The current athletics provision is maintained with Donnelly Fields including full size grass athletics track and two (2) dedicated long jump pits.

Cricket

The existing junior cricket provision is retained as follows:

- Donnelly Fields - two (2) synthetic wickets with junior sized outfielders
- Namoi Playing Fields - five (5) synthetic wickets with junior sized outfielders

Field renovation works should be undertaken on Namoi Playing Fields to level and refinish the playing surface to improve safety and playability.

A new senior cricket facility is proposed on the new land parcel, to be shared with AFL if/when the need arises. The new oval would be a similar facility to Wolseley Oval (with turf wicket) and allow for the establishment of a distinct 'home' of cricket in Gunnedah, with two premier fields located adjacent to one another.

As part of the wider open space master plan project, the Kitchener Park master plan proposes the removal of cricket from Kitchener Park to improve player safety and allow for the creation of a higher grade rugby league facility. Current player numbers indicate that a second cricket oval with turf wicket is not currently required in Gunnedah, and that the current Wolseley Park oval is able to meet current demand. Nonetheless, a second senior facility has been included in the Riverside Precinct to allow for a future jump in participation and increase in player numbers.

The new land parcel also accommodates cricket nets to provide a high quality facility suitable for both games and training. The detailed design of the cricket nets would need to consider flood durability and design to accommodate flow restrictions as needed.

AFL

Although AFL is not an existing use within the Riverside Precinct, the master plan has included a second oval suitable for AFL use in the new land parcel.

This site is well-connected to the existing AFL ground at Wolseley Park and allows space for future expansion if player participation increases over time. The establishment of a second oval so close to Wolseley Park creates a strong 'home' location for AFL within Gunnedah.

Built Form

Existing Amenities Building

The existing amenities building at Donnelly Playing Fields needs renovation to improve functionality and upgrade facilities. Desired outcomes include:

- Canteen relocated to provide a visual connection to Donnelly Fields
- Toilet facilities upgraded and to be opened for public access outside of organised sporting activities to support the popularity of the Riverside shared path and picnic spaces
- Storage areas located within primary built form allowing removal of shipping container storage outside building

The location on an elevated mound requires that consideration must also be given to improving accessibility to the amenities building and adjacent playground. An accessible route compliant with AS1428 should be included as part of any building upgrades.

New Amenities Building

A new amenities building is proposed to the new land parcel and new oval. The building design will need to consider flood resilience and may include a two (2) storey design to locate more durable storage areas at ground level and more sensitive areas at an elevated floor above the possible maximum flood (PMF) level.

The building should include the following:

- Minimum two (2) gender neutral change rooms. Flexible use allows change rooms to be as home and away on game days, and as male and female on training days
- Canteen and canteen store
- Equipment store
- Council store (for maintenance vehicles)
- Umpire and first aid room
- Toilet facilities for spectators, including accessible toilet and baby change facility
- Covered outdoor area to provide shade and weather protection

An optional inclusion in the building would be a club/ community room that could be shared between various sporting clubs using the Riverside Precinct. Dedicated lockable storage for each club allows the room to be multi-purpose rather than dedicated to a specific user group.

Community Facilities

Riverside Shared Path

The Riverside shared path remains in its current location, with additional path links constructed to improve connectivity. Existing narrow portions of the path near Woolshed Reserve should be widened to match the western portion and provide a safe, continuous path network.

To increase community use of the area outside of organised sport, it is proposed to allow public access to toilets within the precinct in daylight hours. Currently toilets are locked when not in use for sport which reduces the maximum length of stay for visitors and limits appeal for many.

As part of upgrades to the precinct, a drinking fountain should be installed in an easily accessible location to serve both casual users and organised sport.

Playground

The existing playground adjacent to the Donnelly Fields amenities building is retained. As part of building upgrades, accessibility should be improved to the playground. Playground upgrade works would occur in the medium term as the current equipment appears to be well within its serviceable lifetime.

As it is not a destination playground and would be considered subservient to the organised sports uses in the precinct, the playground would typically stay as a local level playground. Opportunity exists within this to consider a variety of play opportunities, including nature play elements.

Woolshed Reserve

Woolshed Reserve is primarily used informally by the community, for picnics and dog walking. The existing picnic shelter and table settings are in poor condition and need to be replaced.

A new picnic shelter is proposed in a similar area, with two picnic settings under to allow use by small groups and individuals.

Additionally, the park is an important training facility for Fire & Rescue NSW, with underground facilities used to train firefighters. These facilities have also been used for competitions in the past. No changes are proposed to these items within the park and no new facilities are proposed within their vicinity.

Travelling Stock Route

A travelling stock route is located through the site, heading south towards Gunnedah along O'Keefe Avenue, crossing the Namoi River and turning west along Maitland St, before continuing along Rosemary Street and Bloomfield Street towards a large Crown Land Reserve northwest of the master plan area.

The master plan does not impinge on the travelling stock route and would allow this to remain unaltered. To protect the grass surface, low fencing will be provided around Donnelly Fields and Namoi Playing fields, with regular breaks to facilitate easy pedestrian access.

Trees & Ecology

Tree Removal

Approximately 13 trees would need to be removed to complete the master plan proposals.

Additional Trees

Significant tree planting is proposed throughout the precinct to increase canopy cover and provide shade for users. Trees are also proposed to surround playing fields areas, framing the spaces and providing shade to spectators.

New street trees are proposed as follows:

- Maitland Street west of Chandos Street
- Bloomfield Street between Warrabungle Street and Tempest Street
- Tempest Street
- Rosemary Street

A typical section has been included showing indicative tree location in relation to new pedestrian paths and existing roads.

Tree species selection should focus on locally indigenous tree species which are naturally well-suited to the local environment and will do well with minimal maintenance inputs.

The tree planting to be in accordance with Councils Tree Planting Strategies and Vegetation Management.

Namoi River Riparian Zone

The riverfront within the master plan area currently consists primarily of steep banks with established trees and minimal understorey. Revegetation works should be investigated in these areas to establish an understorey which reflects the native ecosystem and which will provide embankment stabilisation into the future once established.

Near Donnelly Playing fields, there is an area of mown grass to the waters edge. Although it provides valuable river access, the banks are steep and access is dangerous for children and those with limited mobility. Modifications to the river banks to provide easier access is not proposed within this master plan document. Consideration should be given to converting portions of mown grass back to riparian zone vegetation to manage safety concerns,

reduce ongoing maintenance, and improve ecological outcomes.

Koala Feed Trees

The parcel of land located west of the existing amenities building has been planted with rows of koala feed trees as part of a local revegetation project.

The trees are closely planted in rows, with mown grass between mulched rows. Into the future, the planted trees will need thinning to allow trees to establish properly and form into safe specimens. Consideration should be given to removing the turf at ground level and establishing a native understorey in its place to extend the riparian zone and provide attractive habitat for native fauna (including koalas).

Re-vegetation

The area of land between Donnelly Playing Fields and the approach to the bridge from Chandos Street had been identified for the establishment of a vegetated zone. This area is currently mown grass, requiring ongoing maintenance and sometimes attracting vandalism.

Tree planting to be in accordance with Councils Tree Planting Strategies and Vegetation Management.

Accessibility & Parking

Path Network

The existing Riverside shared path is popular and well-used and will remain in its current location. The portion of the path adjacent to Woolshed Reserve is proposed to be widened to match the path typology adjacent Donnelly Fields.

A new path is to be provided around Donnelly Playing Fields to link into the shared path and allow the creation of a loop track for casual use. Pedestrian crossings are proposed over Maitland Street to connect to the new land parcel and extend the path network toward the town centre.

Kerb build-outs are proposed at the corner of Bloomfield Street and Tempest Street to reduce crossing distances and improve visibility. The path network will continue on the other side of the road through Wolseley Park towards Conadilly Street and Chandos Street.

A typical cross-section is included adjacent showing new pedestrian paths, existing roads and proposed tree canopy cover.

Parking

Existing parking is to be formalised along Maitland Street and Rosemary Street, with additional parking provided alongside the new land parcel to support its conversion to open space for active recreation. Providing sealed and linemarked parking bays will help to maximise efficiency and minimise wasted space.

Along the Maitland Street edge of Donnelly Playing Fields, trees are to be planted in dedicated bays to provide shade to both pedestrians and cars.

The current informal gravel access road and car park at the eastern end of Donnelly Fields will be converted to a sealed road with formalised parking to both sides, providing further parking options for visitors.



SYDNEY

Level 7, 80 William Street
East Sydney NSW 2011
Australia

MELBOURNE

Level 5, 145 Russell Street,
Melbourne VIC 3000
Australia

BRISBANE

Level 7, 260 Queen Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
Australia

HO CHI MINH CITY

Ho Chi Minh City, Level 9, 117 Nguyen CuuVan,
Ward 17 Binh Thanh District
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

